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Dec 1959

The Honorable Leo A. Hough, Director
Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Leo:

Thank you for your copy of the memorandum you sent to General Goodpaster on 1 December 1959 regarding the motion picture, "On The Beach."

It was informative and very interesting. I will, of course, consider your evaluation to be confidential.

Again, thank you for sending me a copy.

Sincerely,

Allen Dulles

Allen W. Dulles
Director

O/DCI/SJGrogan:abi (2 Dec 59)

Distribution:

Orig - Add

✓ ① - DCI (via reading)

1 - DDCI

1 - ER (w/basic)

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✓ DDCI RSC

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF CIVIL AND DEFENSE MOBILIZATION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

11-9581
APR 1962

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

December 1, 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ALLEN DULLES:

For your information, I am enclosing my evaluation
of "On The Beach", which I consider to be confidential.



Leo A. Hoegh

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF CIVIL AND DEFENSE MOBILIZATION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

December 1, 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL GOODPASTER:

SUBJECT: "On The Beach"

This is a big (2-1/2 hours) expensive production. Big stars: Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Tony Perkins. From a technical point of view, it is very skillfully done. It carries tremendous emotional impact and is bound to make a deep and lasting impression on the unsophisticated viewer.

Its central message is that our national policy of deterrence is "idiotic." The implication is plain that unless this policy is changed, humanity faces the danger of extinction.

The high point of the film occurs after the visit of the USS SWORDFISH to the Pacific Coast of the United States to investigate a mysterious radio signal. Upon discovery that the signal is emitted by a radio telegraph key being tapped by the cord of a window shade, the last, desperate hope for any surviving life in the northern hemisphere goes glimmering.

After this blow, the crew of the SWORDFISH gather around the scientist (Fred Astaire) and ask how and why it all came about. How did humanity contrive to destroy itself? Astaire replies, in effect:

"The trouble with you is that you want a simple answer. Well, I'll try. I'd say it happened because some people had the perfectly idiotic idea that peace could be preserved by building weapons which could not be used without committing suicide somewhere some poor fellow saw a blip -- or thought he did -- on his radar screen. He felt he could not hesitate one-thousandth of a second or his country might be destroyed. He pushed a button. And then the world went mad"

Toward the end of the film the various modes of suicide chosen by the central characters of the story are depicted with great emotional effect. The preparation of family suicides throughout Melbourne is shown.

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General Goodpaster

At one public square there is an enormous banner saying "THERE IS STILL TIME, BROTHER," under which a Salvation Army group prays for the throng. Each time the camera returns to this scene there are less people there.

In the final sequence of the film the camera travels about the empty, ghostly streets of Melbourne, the last city in the world to see human life, and the final shot of the picture is that of the banner, with its message, "THERE IS STILL TIME, BROTHER."

The promotion of this film is extraordinarily big. It will be opened on December 17 with gigantic premiers in New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles and in thirteen world capitals. Respectable charities have been hoodwinked into sponsoring the premiers in some places. Here in Washington, Mrs. Robert Low Bacon is the sponsor for some theatrical fund. It will be a black tie affair with tickets at \$10.00 apiece. I was invited to speak. I turned it down. I think the White House people should be warned not to be drawn into this.

THIS PRODUCTION IS FICTIONAL AND IS NOT BASED ON SCIENTIFIC FACTS. IN MY OPINION, IT WILL STIMULATE DEFEATISM.

Leo A. Hoegh

cc: Secretary Herter
Mr. Allen Dulles

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